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EXCLUSIVE EYES ONLY

TOP SECRET SENSITIVE

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INSTRUCTIONS APPLY

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T O P S E C R E T SENSITIVE 041000 NOV 72 VIA CAS CHANNELS (BUNKER)  
FROM: AMBASSADOR BUNKER SAIGON 0249  
TO: THE WHITE HOUSE, EXCLUSIVELY EYES ONLY FOR HENRY A. KISSINGER  
1. AS YOU KNOW, WE HAVE BEEN TRYING TO INFLUENCE THE HIGHEST LEVELS OF THE GVN ON THE ISSUES INVOLVED IN THE CEASE-FIRE AGREEMENT. CHARLIE WHITEHOUSE HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO DISCUSS THEM YESTERDAY WITH PRIME MINISTER KHIEM AND MINISTER OF ECONOMY NGOC.  
2. MOST INTERESTING DEVELOPMENT WAS THAT PRIME MINISTER CONFIDED TO WHITEHOUSE THAT HE DOES NOT AGREE WITH THIEU. ON CEASE-FIRE, HE SAID: "OBVIOUSLY THERE WILL BE A CEASE-FIRE SOON. WE SHOULD STOP WORRYING ABOUT IT AND SHOULD START PLANNING INTELLIGENTLY WHAT WE WILL DO AFTERWARDS. ON THE NCRC: "THERE WILL BE A POLITICAL CONTEST AND ELECTIONS BUT THERE IS NO REASON TO BE AFRAID OF ELECTIONS. THE POPULATION WILL SUPPORT US AGAINST THE COMMUNISTS AND I THINK WE WOULD GET OVER 90 PER CENT OF THE VOTES." ON THE NVA REMAINING IN THE SOUTH: "THIS IS NO PROBLEM. WE HAVE DEFEATED THEM ALREADY. THE IMPORTANT THING IS TO HAVE GOOD LEADERSHIP, GOOD GOVERNMENT AND GOOD ORGANIZATION. I DO NOT SAY THESE THINGS IN FRONT OF THE PRESIDENT. HE IS THE PRESIDENT SO I DO NOT DISAGREE. ALSO THE VICE PRESIDENT IS VERY HARD. HE IS VERY STUPID AND DOES NOT UNDERSTAND POLITICS. THE PRESIDENT IS INFLUENCED BY THE SMALL GROUP HE SEES." KHIEM THEN LOOKED AS THOUGH HE THOUGHT HE HAD SAID TOO MUCH. IT WAS CLEAR FROM THE CONTEXT IN WHICH THESE REMARKS WERE MADE THAT KHIEM UNDERSTANDS PERFECTLY THE RISKS OF A BREAK WITH US AND IS CONFIDENT THAT THE GVN SHOULD BE ABLE TO COPE WITH THE PRESENT SITUATION. WHETHER HE WILL OVERCOME THE COMPLEXES INHERENT IN THIS MANDARINATE AND SAY SO TO THIEU IS DOUBTFUL UNTIL THE REAL MOMENT OF DECISION IS REACHED.

3. MINISTER NGOC IS FAR LESS LACONIC THAN THIEM AND HE ASKED TO SEE WHITEHOUSE AFTER SEVERAL SESSIONS WITH COOPER WHO BROUGHT HIM FROM A STATE OF CONSIDERABLE ANXIETY TO A VERY THOUGHTFUL AND COMPREHENSIVE VIEW OF SOUTH VIETNAM'S PREDICAMENT. IN THE COURSE OF A WIDE-RANGING CONVERSATION NGOC EMPHASIZED THAT HE SEES NO SIGN OF PANIC IN BANKING CIRCLES. IN HIS VIEW, THE ALARM AFTER THE FALL OF QUANG TRI WAS FAR GREATER. HE HAS MET WITH THE MANAGERS OF ALL THE PRINCIPAL BANKERS AND THEY REPORT NO UNEXPECTED WITHDRAWALS AND ARE CONFIDENT THERE WILL BE NO FLIGHT OF CAPITAL.
4. WHITEHOUSE EMPHASIZED THE IMPORTANCE OF MAINTAINING UNITY WITH THE U.S. DURING THE DIFFICULT DAYS AHEAD AND FOUND NGOC CONVINCED OF THE NECESSITY OF ACCEPTING THE BEST POSSIBLE DEAL WHICH CAN BE MADE IN A MANNER WHICH WILL SAFEGUARD A LONG-RANGE GVN/U.S. RELATIONSHIP. NGOC HAD CLEARLY GIVEN THE MATTER A LOT OF THOUGHT AND UNDERSTOOD THE ISSUES CLEARLY. TOWARD THE END OF THE CONVERATION, HE ASKED WHETHER THE PRESENT TREND WAS IRREVERSIBLE. WHITEHOUSE REPLIED THAT BARRING VERY UNFORESEEN CIRCUMSTANCES IT WAS. NGOC ASKED WHETHER THIEU UNDERSTOOD THIS TO BE THE CASE, WHITEHOUSE REPLIED THAT THIS HAD BEEN MADE CLEAR TO THIEU IN A VARIETY OF WAYS. WHETHER HE REALLY UNDERSTOOD IT REMAINED TO BE SEEN, BUT THE ISSUES HAD BEEN PRESENTED VERY STARKLY. NGOC SAID HE HOPED TO HAVE A CHANCE TO TALK TO THIEU SOON. POSTURING WAS A NATURAL THING FOR POLITICANS TO DO AND THIEU HAD GAINED A LOT OF SUPPORT WHICH WAS A GOOD THING BY HIS RECENT ACTIONS. FROM NOW ON, HOWEVER, IT WAS IMPORTANT TO SEPARATE POLICY FROM RHETORIC. ISSUES SHOULD BE DECIDED ON THE BASIS OF VIETNAM'S LONG-RANGE INTEREST AND IT WAS ESSENTIAL TO PREVENT THIEU FROM ENGAGING IN SUICIDAL HEROICS.
5. THE FOREGOING IS ENCOURAGING. NGOC IS BOLDER THAN KHIEM BUT HE WILL BE CAUTIOUS IN HANDLING A QUESTION OF THIS KIND WITH THIEU. NEVERTHELESS, IT IS REASSURING TO FIND THESE TWO KEY LEADERS IN OUR CORNER.
6. WARM REGARDS.

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